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# FIRE MORE THAN WATER

*Notes for the Story of a Ship by*

CYPRIAN BLAGDEN

P.B.



LONGMANS



See No.

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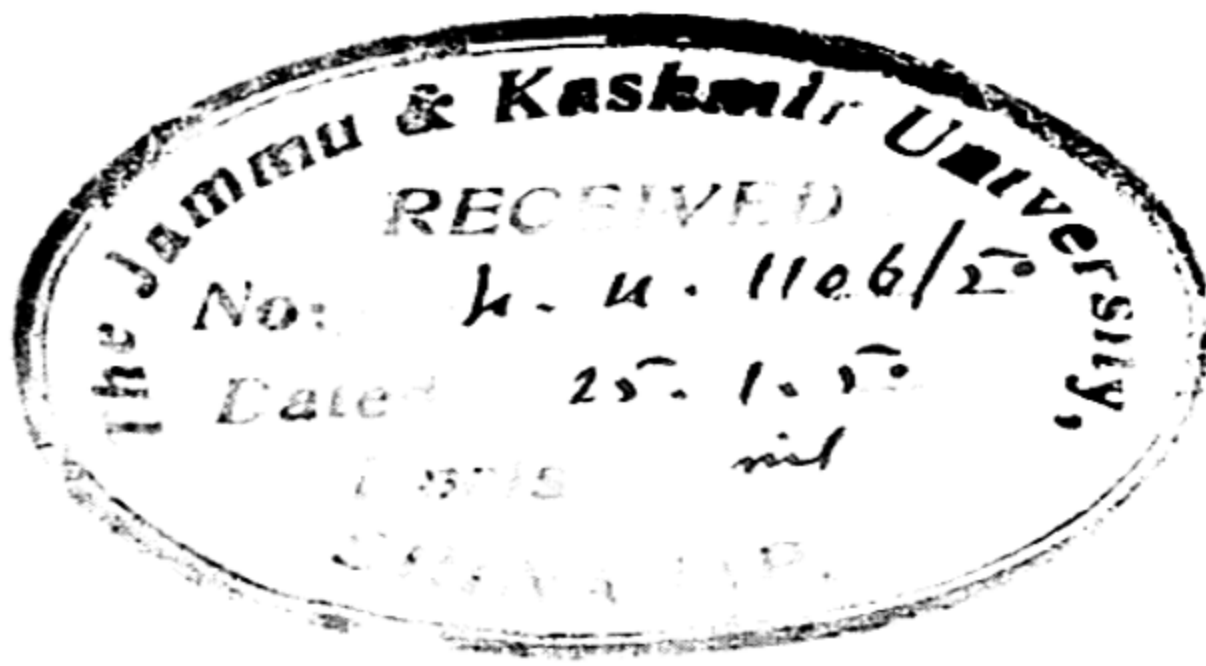
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FIRE  
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THOMAS NORTON LONGMAN 1770-1842

*From the painting by Thomas Phillips  
in the possession of H. K. Longman, Esq.*

# FIRE MORE THAN WATER

*NOTES FOR THE STORY OF A SHIP*

by

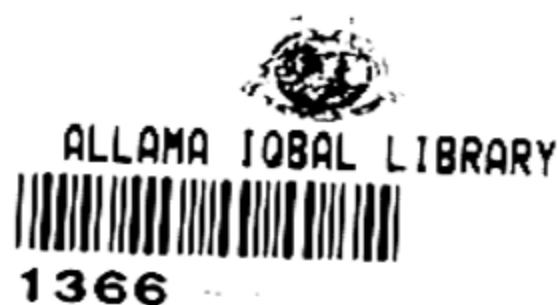
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‘ Ships fear fire more  
than water.’

*From an old proverb.*



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## THE QUESTION

WE were gathered together to do honour to the old lady on her hundredth birthday. 'To what,' asked a courageous journalist, 'to what do you attribute your living to so great an age?' The centenarian regarded her questioner without interest for an uncomfortable minute; then, in a tone of voice which invited no further questions, she answered, 'To my good fortune, young man, in being born in the year 1849.'

If I were to disguise myself as a courageous journalist and put a similar, or even the same, question to the firm of Longmans, Green and Company Limited on their passing yet another milestone in their history, I might expect one of three alternative answers. The first would be, 'The founder of the business published his first book in 1724;' that is, 225 years ago. The next would be, 'The first Thomas Longman to go into the book trade was born in 1699;' that is, 250 years ago. The answer to end all impertinent questions would be, 'We still use the "Ship" as our trade sign. We can trace its continuous use as such right back to 1640 when John Crook began publishing in St. Paul's Churchyard "At the Sign of the Ship". And *that*, young man, was 309 years ago.' Whereupon the firm would turn away from further questions and back to the absorbing business of making and distributing books.

But the original question still stands and is worth the trouble which a hunt for the answers, the many answers, will entail. And hunt it will have to be; for the 'outlandish proverb'—SHIPS FEAR FIRE MORE THAN WATER—so aptly

and opportunely included by George Herbert in the collection he put together the year after Crook set up in business, has been thrice proved true. First, there was the Fire of London; then there was the Paternoster Row tallow-boiler's fire of 1861; finally there was the burning of 1940. The superstitious may take comfort from the hope that honour is as satisfied with three fires as it is supposed to be with three breakages; but comfort does not bring back lost records. Fortunately, enough has survived in various forms for us to be able to piece together some answers to the original question; these I propose to hang, somewhat arbitrarily, round the three dates already mentioned—1724, 1699 and 1640. What follows does not pretend to be a history of the firm, though history comes in; nor does it pretend to examine all the activities of the firm at any one stage of its development, though the sources of important present-day activities are suggested. I am looking for *answers* and I am most likely to find them in the earlier years, their importance being reasons for and not necessarily aspects of the firm's existence in 1949.



15

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J. Downing	13	{	Blackball's Sermons, 2d vol. 8vo. (except one Sermon.)	Half.	
			Boyer's French Dictionary, in 4to and 8vo.	100 and 20th.	6:0
J. Downing	14	{	Buchanan's History of Scotland, 2 vol. 8vo.	A Sixth.	10:5
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J. Downing	16	{	Blome's Hist. of the Bible, in 4to, 333 in 1500, going to the Press.		118:12

Thomas



Longman

Signature of Thomas Longman I on a lease for the "Black Swan" dated 20 September 1735



## THE 1724 ANSWER

**T**HOMAS LONGMAN completed his seven-year apprenticeship in the summer of the previous year. Why his guardians had sent him at the unusually late age of seventeen away from his home town of Bristol and why they had bound him to a bookseller and why they had chosen John Osborn who carried on the trade of stationer and bookseller at the sign of the Oxford Arms in Lombard Street, are questions to which there are no certain answers. Thomas, however, was an orphan, the eldest child of his father's second family, and he may have been a potential rival to his half brother. This might explain his late start and his removal to London; his own determination to make a career in the book trade rather than in the family business of soap-making—an occupation that was, perhaps, as distasteful to him as to the Frenchman in the odd story told by Richard of Devizes—and the paucity of booksellers in Bristol (there were but three in 1717) may have pointed him to London. But Thomas, like later members of the Longman family, preferred to reproduce and distribute the thoughts and feelings and life histories of others, and to rest content with seeing his name at the foot rather than in the middle of title-pages; he has left no record which might give us a clue to the choice of either his profession or his master.

Let me put it down as his first piece of luck. John Osborn had a good business, a good friend and, so far as we know, a good daughter. The friend, William Taylor, who was in business at the signs of the Ship and the Black Swan in Paternoster Row, having appointed Osborn as one of his executors,

died in time for Thomas Longman, who had previously come into his inheritance, to buy his stock and goodwill and premises. The daughter, Mary, married the ex-apprentice and wore the 'necklace of pearl' left with this intention in the will of Thomas' mother. The good business in Lombard Street, with *its* stock and goodwill and shares in copyrights, but without its sign, was given up the following year and moved to the more commodious double premises of the son-in-law in Paternoster Row. Taylor's other executor, Innys, sealed his approval of the arrangement and took what was left—so the story goes—by marrying Elizabeth, the widow, who had also made her name, her maiden name, as a publisher. The two businesses which J. Osborn and T. Longman thus united I shall give some account of later on; I will only mention here the reproduction of page one of the auction catalogue for the sale of Taylor's copyrights and shares in copyrights; it clearly shows certain purchases made by Osborn and Longman, and what they paid for them.

The second piece of luck is bound up with two features of the book trade which are peculiar to the eighteenth century (with some overlap at either end) and at their most prominent during its first half. The following 'Proposal' well illustrates both features:

BOYLE, the Hon. ROBT. Proposal for publishing by Subscription the Works of, with notes by Peter Shaw, M.D. 3 vols. 4to. Will be ready to deliver by Dec. 10, 1724. The whole making above 250 sheets, the Price to subscribers 1*l.* 15*s.* in Sheets, 15*s.* down & the remainder on delivery. To be printed for W. & J. Innys, J. Osborne at the Oxford Arms in Lombard St. & T. Longman at the Ship & Black Swan in Paternoster Row.

Here is an important and expensive publishing venture. The three volumes contained 'The Philosophical Works, Abridged, Methodized and disposed under the General Heads

of, Physics, Statics, Pneumatics, Natural History, Chymistry & Medicine', by a Fellow of the Royal Society—just the sort of work which might appear in Longmans' catalogue today. But the risk for a bookseller in a small way of business was great, and it was spread partly by inviting subscriptions amounting, in this case, to nearly half the final price, and partly by sharing the 'undertaking' with a number of other booksellers, each 'undertaker' receiving that proportion of the printed sheets to which his share and his financial contribution towards the cost of manufacture entitled him. Furthermore, the practice of inviting subscriptions would often (though not in the case of a new edition of already well-known works like those of Boyle) so gauge the market as to fix the number of copies to be printed or even to discourage publication altogether while there was still time to withdraw without burning the fingers.

There are other little points of interest about this proposal. Boyle, who died in 1691, had been published during his lifetime by the father of William Taylor; there is, therefore, already the beginning of a tradition, a respect for the good things of the past and an intelligent exploitation of what was already known but still in demand. With this determination to keep old publications alive has gone, all through the firm's history, a chariness about publishing what is new and exciting; this has sometimes seemed unenterprising but it has paid in the long run. 'Enterprising' publishers—God bless them!—are apt, sad though it is to say so, to pay with their lives for the enthusiasm which sets them a little ahead of the general taste of the public.

W. Innys was Taylor's other executor and Osborn, it must be noted, was still in Lombard Street. The exact date of the proposal is not known, but it appeared in Wilford's Monthly Catalogue for October. 10 December was apparently too



optimistic a date for the delivery of printed sheets and the title pages bear the year MDCCXXV; they also read, 'London, Printed for W. & J. Innys at the West End of St. Pauls, & J. Osborn and T. Longman in Paternoster Row.' Father-in-law and son-in-law had had time to join forces.

Another small point is the bringing in of an editor to abridge, methodize and dispose of the original text under headings which would make the work more intelligible to later readers. I shall return to Peter Shaw again.

Lastly, there is the delivery of the volumes 'in sheets'. No doubt a few copies were bound up and sold in the shop to casual customers at a price considerably higher than the subscriber was asked to pay; but the capital outlay on binding the whole edition, which is today such an uncomfortably heavy item in the costing of a book, was, when Thomas Longman started in business, very small.

The mention of the word shop points to another eighteenth-century practice which only a few bookseller-publishers keep alive today. Longmans are publishers and when they look back into the past it is with the eyes of publishers that they see the activities of their ancestors. But Thomas Longman bought a bookseller's business and paid considerably more for the stock and the goodwill of the signs than he did for William Taylor's shares in publishing ventures. In 1815, at the head of a list of 'IMPORTANT WORKS published during the present season, by Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown,' the publishers 'having just completed and fitted up elegant and commodious Retail Rooms, retired from their Wholesale Business, for the purpose of exhibiting their extensive and valuable Stock of Books, including an unprecedented Collection of the Rarities and Curiosities of Literature, they take the Liberty respectfully to invite their Friends and the Amateurs of Literature, to view their

interesting Literary Treasures.' (I take it that the differentiation between the Friends of the 'long firm' and the Amateurs of Literature was merely a slip on the part of the clerk who drafted the advertisement; but his punctuation and use of capitals are typical of the period.) For a great part of the life of Longmans the book-buying public thought of them as booksellers. When Keats required a copy of Chapman's *Homer* to replace Haydon's copy which he had lost he wrote, 'I must get one at Longmans;' and he would expect it to be a second-hand copy. Dr. Harvey looked back to their 'invaluable collection of rare books from which bibliopolists are allowed to choose the pets they desire on really low terms . . . premier editions of Tasso . . . the "Romance of the Rose" in all its beauty, Caxtons of an undeniable genuineness . . . Often books are bought for their outside merely.' T. F. Dibdin, writing in 1831 of the usual slump in the book trade, described the gloom in the upper floors at No. 39. 'Everything venerable,' he was told in one of the rooms retired from the wholesale business, 'seemed to stick with glue-like tenacity.' The old-book trade continued to be a marked feature of the business until 1849; while the retail department, though at the last it must have sold only Longmans' own publications, was not closed until 31 December 1886, after which retail orders were sent to Griffin Farran & Co. in St. Paul's Churchyard. Round the wheel comes—for that part of the business which in the beginning had been the basis of the whole structure—to the very locality where the Ship originally stood. The point, then, from which I have ridden away is that Thomas Longman bought a bookseller's business and combined the running of this with publishing—an advantage only partly outweighed by the services which an organization like the Book Centre can offer a young publisher starting up today. For at a time when readers were

fewer—and, in many cases, richer—and the number of books, and new books, as vastly and beautifully smaller, it was possible for one man easily to combine various functions of the book business; today this is considered well-nigh impossible. It was an advantage to a young man with limited resources to be able to sell his own publications to his own private customers at the full retail prices and to be able to fill the gaps in their library shelves from the stock, new and second-hand, in his own shop. It was also an advantage to him to be able to replenish his stock in dribblets as opportunities at booksellers' sales offered, instead of having to invest larger sums in publications of his own on which the return might be problematical and would certainly be delayed.

Even so, being a bookseller was only part of Thomas Longman's ambition, perhaps only a means to an end. It is obvious from a study of the careful purchases he made of the copyright shares which William Taylor had owned and of his steady buying of other shares in suitable publications as they came on the market, that it was as a publisher that he saw himself—and signed himself. He must have been considerably assisted in building up this side of his business by the issuing of proposals and by the practice of joint-undertaking. Not that he confined himself to either of these methods. The cheaper books were issued without proposals, and there was often money enough—and confidence enough—at the Ship to publish on their own. Osborn and Longman sometimes set only their own names at the foot of a title-page and, after the death of the former, the name of Longman often appears alone, though at times it is Thomas' along with that of one of his partners—his wife, Mary, or another Thomas Longman, his nephew and successor. (There was also, for a few months, a man called Shewell, who is nothing more to us now than the name on a tombstone.) But at any time he



*could* test public reaction with a proposal or he *could* share his risk with fellow booksellers, demonstrating by the second practice the sad difference between voluntary co-operation and formal Association and recalling, firstly, that mysterious and fascinating organization known as Conger, founded in 1719 by a group of booksellers for joint-venturing and so nicknamed, perhaps, by jealous rivals, and, secondly, the productive meetings at the Chapter Coffee House, where so many joint undertakings were arranged.

I have suggested that there was an element of luck in the choosing for the young orphan from Bristol of a profession (for the second time I refer to it as a profession, largely on the authority of a recent writer on publishing, Mr. Walter Buchler, who describes it as 'a gentleman's occupation'), a profession which offered certain general advantages in the early eighteenth century to the ex-apprentice with a little money and certain particular advantages to Thomas Longman who had such excellent guidance and support. I am coming almost immediately to a consideration of the personal qualities which enabled him to take advantage of conditions as he discovered them and to lay the foundations of a business on which his successors, possessing, it seems, some of his own qualities, were able to build up the firm we know today. But there are some purely historical factors which encouraged the growth of publishing during the reigns of the Georges, factors which, though they appear at first sight to be the causes, may on closer inspection reveal themselves as the results of the work of able men.

In 1709 was passed the first Copyright Act, which secured the rights in an author's work for fourteen years from the date of publication and for a further fourteen years if the author were then still alive. Publishing without some protection of copyright is now quite unthinkable in this

country; it is perhaps difficult to understand what an immense fillip to publishers this limited degree of protection could give, but it is easier if we remember that booksellers firmly believed that copyright was perpetual until, in 1774, the House of Lords said it wasn't; the fact that booksellers had *acted* as though it were perpetual for over half a century (for most of which the Longmans were in business) is the important point. The passing of the Act was not, of course, the result of sudden benevolence on the part of Her Majesty's Government; it was the culmination of years of agitation on the part of authors, printers and booksellers to clear up the unsatisfactory licensing system. The names of writers like Pope and Dryden are known to a world of readers today; but the names of printers like Fell and Bowyer and of booksellers like Lintot, Tonson, Guy and Churchill are known, if they are known at all, for reasons which they might not have been happy to recall. Yet Espinasse wrote in 1860, 'There were more publishers of substance, energy and knowledge in the London of the first half of the eighteenth century than in that of the second half of the nineteenth century.' Even allowing for the natural aptitude to praise the past and for the irritation of a journalist delving into the early histories of publishers like Murray, Longmans and Rivington, this is still high praise. The Act of Queen Anne would certainly not have been passed if the booksellers had not at the time shown both a determination to achieve it and also the ability to make proper use of it. Besides, they were Members of Parliament, High Sheriffs of Counties and founders of Institutions which survive to this day.

Then there is a whole group of commercial developments which had their effect on the book trade as much as on any other. The growth of a banking system made the conduct of business both easier from day to day and more easily planned

over a period of years. With this, partly as cause and partly as effect, went the *general* extension of commercial activity. The selling of books, along with the selling of soap and sealing wax, benefited; and the resulting prosperity led, amongst other things, to the fashion of forming libraries which, if they were nothing else, were a visible symbol of a man's position in the world. Owing to the improvement in the means of locomotion this prosperity was not confined to the cities of London and Westminster and to their surrounding villages; it went out to the provincial cities in the United Kingdom and, perhaps even more important, to the new colonies across the sea. Two of the most interesting features of the Longman business in the eighteenth century are the trade with America ('Ships fear fire more than water') and the contacts with booksellers in, for instance, Edinburgh, Shrewsbury, Chester, Ipswich, Ludlow, Hereford, Norwich and York; these contacts often led to joint-undertaking.

The growth of literacy is almost too obvious to be mentioned: but I must draw attention to the steady increase in the number of women readers. With this increase went the beginning of circulating libraries—in London as early as 1740—and the rise in the number of book clubs. With a change in the quantity of readers and potential book-buyers went a change in the quality. Lists of books published in this century show how publishers were catering for the special interests of the new reading public. Here were new fields for the bookseller who was tired of reprints of the Classics, of political pamphlets and sermons. Such an increased demand, coupled with the developments already mentioned, led naturally to improvement in book-production. New type-faces were designed and cast, ways were found of making paper better and cheaper, the methods of processing were improved. These changes led to cheaper books, to more

buyers, to more books . . . and so on into the widening circle.

Finally, I must, in my search for reasons why Thomas Longman's foundation flourishes to this day, put forward this apparently absurd and irrelevant fact—that many of the institutions which were set going about the same time are also still with us. The Bank of England started in 1694, the S.P.C.K. in 1698 and the S.P.G. in 1701. The National Debt began in the reign of William III, Queen Anne's Bounty (needless to say) in that of his successor, and the Cabinet System in the reign of *her* successor. It was a good time for planting.



## THE 1699 ANSWER

THE great-grandfather of the founder of the firm—also a Thomas Longman—came from Winford in Somerset and his family were yeomen. He was apprenticed to a soap-maker in Bristol where he and his descendants prospered. The founder's father is described as Merchant and his half-brother Ezekiel, apprenticed to a linen-draper in the year Thomas was born (did he, too, turn up his nose at the making of soap?), became a Councillor and a Sheriff; he died, in 1738, 'at his seat at Busleton (immensely rich)' and with the title of 'Esq.'

Thomas was therefore born with certain financial and social advantages which can have been only partially offset by the early deaths of both his father and his mother. Four years before he was free of his apprenticeship he inherited considerable property in Somerset and knew that when he came to set up in business on his own he would have some money at his command. The Bristol records suggest that with the death of Ezekiel the Sheriff the family's active connexion with the city ceased, though Thomas' great nephew was sufficiently in touch with the book trade there to take one member of it into partnership and to buy the copyrights of its most famous bookseller.

'By their fruits ye shall know them.' This is an admirable rule in day-to-day dealings with one's fellow men but it does not by itself reveal much of the personality of a bookseller and publisher who died nearly two hundred years ago. We know that he came of a family who had achieved considerable commercial success under seventeenth-century conditions



in a provincial city and that this success enabled Thomas Longman to buy a good business in the trade—or profession—he had chosen. We can also trace from the Sale Catalogues, the Book Lists and the title-pages of the second quarter of the eighteenth century how he steadily added to the value of his business by judicious publishing of new books and by judicious buying of shares in existing works. But of his activities as a *bookseller* we have no evidence and of Thomas Longman as a man we have very little.

I picture him as serious-minded and rather old for his years. His childhood from the age of nine may not have been very happy and his having to begin a new life as an apprentice to a strange trade in a strange city at an age when his fellow apprentices of the same standing would all be three years younger than himself may have made him welcome the company of older people. Mary, his wife, was eight years older and his partner, John Osborn, much older. Yet the latter gave up a good shop with a compelling sign, the Oxford Arms, to throw in his lot with a much younger and largely inexperienced man. I do not think it can have been solely for the capital which Longman could command; there must have been something in the personality of the younger man that inspired both confidence and affection.

A small piece of evidence in favour of the confidence people had for him is provided by Dr. Johnson. Thomas Longman was one of the five undertakers (evidence of his publishing acumen) who, on 18 June 1746, signed an agreement with the Doctor to produce a Dictionary of the English language. Nine years later, when the time came for the settlement of the accounts, it was found that Johnson, instead of having credit due to him against the stipulated sum of £1,575, was actually in the publishers' debt. The publishers unanimously agreed not only to forget the debt but

Sir

The Contract fairly engrossed was sent to me yesterday, I suppose to Mr. Knapp's direction who is out of town. I should think it a favor if you and the rest of the Gentlemen would breakfast with me that we may sign. If you will appoint a day and write a note to the effect, the Board will take it to each of them, or if any other place be more convenient, the articles shall be brought wherever you shall desire.

Sir,

Gen. Sumner Avenue

Sam: Johnson

At the Golden Anchor and  
Hobson's Bay

To Mr. Seymour Bookeller

Pateroster Row

to pay for Johnson's share of the entertainment at the inn where the meeting took place. (Either the debt must have been very small or Johnson's consumption of food and drink very large for this detail of generosity to have been preserved and often retold. Perhaps—though I do not really think so—the publishers had behaved with unusual generosity. Whatever the reason, it is pleasant to recall that talking business over food and drink is a habit that still persists; the parallel convention of entertaining those who attended a sale of stock or 'copies' with a dinner and a good glass of wine in the middle of the day has, with the departure of the sale of copyrights, faded into history. The last recorded Sale Dinner at No. 39—held for rather a different purpose—is 5 November 1872, a somewhat ominous date to choose.) Thomas Longman lived just long enough to see the successful publication of the Dictionary but died just when Johnson had planned to stay with his friend Warton at Oxford. 'But death, you know,' wrote Johnson, postponing his visit, 'hears not supplications, nor pays any regard to the convenience of mortals.' Not a very warm tribute to a man who had treated him with some generosity!

Longman's treatment of Ephraim Chambers, the compiler of the famous *Cyclopaedia of Arts and Sciences* (the mother of all Encyclopaedias and another piece of evidence for perspicacious publishing), shows, much more decisively, the warm-heartedness of the man. First, as one of the undertakers, he agreed to make Chambers a gift of £500 when it was discovered how successful the venture was proving. Then, a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* recalled three years after Thomas' death how well his publishers had treated old Chambers at the end of his life. 'Mr. Longman in particular used him with the liberality of a prince and the tenderness of a father; his house was ever open to receive

him, and when he was there nothing could exceed his care and anxiety over him; even his natural absence of mind was consulted, and during his illness jellies and other proper refreshments were industriously left for him at those places where it was least likely he should avoid seeing them.' The picture of the successful publisher holding proper refreshment in one hand and scratching his head with the other while he pondered, not where Ephraim would be *most* likely to find the food but where he would be *least* likely to miss it, is irresistible.

Finally, I must refer again to the editor of Boyle's Works. There is no means of knowing what Dr. Shaw was paid for his trouble but there is proof that his association with his publisher was long and happy. Though he became physician to George II, he continued to be the Longmans' doctor and helped Mary through a serious illness in 1739. He continued also to publish with Thomas. Then in 1750 there was published at 5s. an octavo volume called '*The Reflector*, representing human affairs as they are and may be improved. *Veluti in Speculo*'. The author, whose name does not appear on the title-page, is now known to be Dr. Shaw and he received the following letter from his old friend:

Sir I persuade myself neither the public nor you will be displeased at my returning in this shape your own work into your hand. No author that I know of has wrote more usefully than yourself; or shewn a greater regard to the welfare of mankind. As you are so happily qualified, I, with pleasure, present this taste of you to the Reader, & am Sir, your most obliged & most humble servant the Publisher.

Thomas and Mary had no children but 'T. Longman' the publisher has a whole line of vigorous descendants to whom he managed to pass on a broad-based and prosperous business and a name that was beginning to count in the London book



**Title**

**Author**

**Accession No.**

**Call No.**

**Borrower's  
No.**

**Issue  
Date**

**Borrower's  
No.**

**Issue  
Date**



# THE SHIP

ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD

## THE BLACK SWAN

PATERNOSTER ROW  
AND AVE MARIA LANE

Awnsham Churchill, 1680

John Churchill, 1690

Sold to William Taylor, 1719

John Crook, 1640

Benjamin Tooke, 1669

John Taylor, 1687

William Taylor, 1707  
*moved to  
Paternoster Row, 1711*

John Osborn, 1725 and Thomas Longman I, 1724

Mary Osborn, 1755  
*wife of Thomas Longman I*

Thomas Longman IV, 1832

Thomas Norton Longman V, 1873   George Henry Longman, 1879

(Henry Kerr Longman)

Robert Guy Longman, 1909

John Cecil  
Longman  
1947

Mark Frederic Kerr  
Longman  
1947

Thomas Michael  
Longman  
1947

## OXFORD ARMS

LOMBARD STREET

Thomas Guy, 1682  
*Founder of Guy's Hospital*

John Osborn and T. Varnam, 1710

Thomas Longman I, apprenticed 1716  
*Bought 'The Ship' 1724*  
John Osborn  
*joined 'The Ship' 1725*

(Henry Longman)

Thomas Longman II, 1754

Thomas Norton Longman III, 1794

William Longman, 1839

Charles James Longman, 1877   Hubert Harry Longman, 1880

William Longman, 1909

Note: The dates from 1724 show the year  
of entry into partnership.

trade; these can only have been achieved by hard work (shop-keeping hours were, in 1747, from 7 A.M. to 8 P.M., six days a week) and a nose for what the public wanted. But even more important, he established a tradition that an author is a man to be treated generously, even when there may be nothing more to expect from him. In these days of elaborate contracts and literary agents an author's interests are better cared for. In the second quarter of the eighteenth century the establishment of a policy of fair dealing as a minimum requirement and of generosity when it was possible was a great achievement nobly added to by succeeding generations.

The founder's successor was the son of his younger brother. He was called Thomas after his uncle and, having been apprenticed to his uncle, took over the business with the help of his aunt at the age of twenty-four. He is described by a contemporary as 'a man of the most exemplary character, both in his profession and in his private life, and as universally esteemed for his benevolence as for his integrity'. He therefore carried on the tradition; he consolidated the footholds his uncle had established and he developed the business along two lines which I have already mentioned as ripe for exploitation—business with the American Colonies and business with the provinces; I shall return to these points later. He married the sister of Mr. Harris who for many years managed the Covent Garden Theatre and through whom must have come many of the plays which Thomas Longman published towards the end of the century. He also helped in establishing *The Times*. He was therefore a man of some standing in the London of the day. But what I wish to emphasize here is that, with the help of his wife, he founded a dynasty whose ability to produce competent male successors would be the envy of many a more famous family;

even his daughter was married in the true dynastic tradition. He also made two significant changes. He bought a house in Hampstead to which he moved with his family away from the City; and, by Act of Parliament, he was compelled to remove, or at least to place flat against the wall, the sign of the Ship; from 1770 he published from 39 Paternoster Row. (It is easy to be sentimental about the past and I am sorry I was not born early enough to see Christopher Coningsby's sign of 'The Golden Turk's Head and Ink Bottle near St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street'. But the heavy signs used to blow down and hurt passers-by.)

Thomas Norton, the eldest son of Thomas II, was born in 1771 and, though he was not formally apprenticed to his father, was so trained in the various departments of the business that he was beginning at the age of twenty-one to take the burden of responsibility off the elder man. A year or two later, when the father was only coming in to help on Magazine days, Owen Rees, who had been trained as a bookseller in Bristol, entered the business, bringing with him not only youthful enthusiasm and Welsh vitality but a nature that was 'bland, courteous, candid and sincere'. 'When there were often angry contentions between the booksellers and the authors,' wrote Britten, one of the authors, 'I always found him eager and anxious to reconcile differences, to soothe irritated feelings and endeavour to urge authors to industry and perseverance, and his colleagues to forbearance and generosity.' For forty years Rees was a partner in the firm and during this time the business grew from a compact and flourishing shop run by the proprietor and four assistants to a complex organization with 'its provincial, its Scotch, its Irish, its foreign, its American departments,' managed, at one time, by one senior and two junior members of the Longman family and by Messrs. Rees, Hurst, Orme, Brown



and Green. Thomas Hurst and Cosmo Orme were invited to become partners soon after they had opened up a wholesale business with large country connexions; the former had to retire because he drew bills in the firm's name to help a spendthrift brother; the latter, having learned his business with Longmans, stayed till the young Longmans had been partners for some time. Thomas Brown was the son of one of the 'four assistants' already referred to, and was certainly named by his grateful father after the founder's nephew; he became, in the phrase of one writer, 'the Nestor of the Row' and continued to live at No. 39 until he was burnt out in 1861 and forced to live as far away as Ludgate Hill; his name lives on the title-pages of the books published by the firm between 1811 and 1859 and, but for the recent war, it would have lived in the great West Window for which he gave the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's £1,500 shortly before his death. Bevis Green seems to be remembered only as the father of the partner whose name was perpetuated by the registering of the company as Longmans, Green & Co. in 1889.

But Owen Rees lives on in his own right and as the first partner (for Shewell hardly counts) who was not a member of the family. He also illustrates the beginnings of two planks in the Longman policy which have been fundamental for the last 150 years—the travelling of senior members of the firm, in their search for business and authors, outside the boundaries of the City of London, and the picking of outstanding men to do this work for them. Rees came from Wales, was trained in the West Country and settled in London; but he made a point, in which contemporary transport developments certainly helped him, of moving about England and of visiting Scotland. On one visit to Sir Walter Scott the latter's horse collapsed and died while the two of them were out

riding. This was made the excuse for adding £100 to the agreed £500 which the firm paid for the copyright of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*; the policy of the first Thomas Longman was being continued and was building up the tradition of the 'customary generosity' referred to in contemporary letters. In mentioning these aspects of policy I am not suggesting that Longmans have shown more liberality in dealing with authors or more perspicacity in choosing their employees or more enterprise in exploring markets than other publishers. I am merely calling attention to certain qualities in successive generations of a family business—as these qualities appear to me and as they seem to affect the development and the longevity of that business. It would be possible (though, in my opinion, not so easy) to paint the other side of the picture—to quote disgruntled authors, to point to unsatisfactory servants and to recall golden commercial opportunities missed. 'The question, then, is,' Wordsworth said in a peevish letter to Samuel Rogers in 1825, 'whether there be in the trade, more liberality, more enterprise, or more skill in managing the sale of works characterised and circumstanced as mine are, than have fallen to the lot of Messrs. Longman & Co.' Every author published by the firm must have asked himself the same questions at some time or other and to each question must have answered himself; 'Yes, there surely are.' And yet . . . and yet, many authors choose to stay, sometimes even to the third generation; and the Ship still sails; and there are still members of the Longman family to navigate it. They themselves are ready to admit that they have inclined to stay at home (if I may change the metaphor) and wait for business to seek them out; but they have also been ready to back the enterprise sponsored by their colleagues. They will bewail the fact that their predecessors have not been more careful of the physical



memorials of the past so that the obliteration of the records need not have been so complete; but their predecessors have at least preserved the tradition, beside which the records are, literally, so much paper. 'Adherence to and, when desirable, promotion of old employees, literary and commercial, has always been a characteristic of the House of Longman.' Espinasse wrote that ninety years ago, and it is still true: the family, as a family of publishers, has a standard which it maintains without questioning the origins. One more word while we are still on the wrong side of the picture. Lack of ambition may be a weakness; it is certainly remarkable that, in spite of considerable economic prosperity, the seven generations, which span the period between today and the birth of Thomas Longman 250 years ago, have thrown up neither a genius whose ambition has carried him away from the comparatively obscure activity of publishing nor a gambler who has thrown away the advantages secured by his predecessors. Either could have brought an end to the business, and the absence of either (there is not the faintest clink of clog or of whatever takes the place of clog in Somerset) is another clue to the answers I am trying to piece together.

That hare was put up by Owen Rees who is important enough to start a good many more; and before going back to Thomas Norton Longman, to whose credit I have so far only placed the association with Rees, I want to record that Rees, too, has had brilliant and successful descendants—publishing heirs, that is, for he had no children. In 1884, for instance, there joined the firm, by invitation, an elementary schoolmaster called J. W. Allen. When he retired as a partner in 1932 he had completely changed the character, not of the firm but of the balance of business it did. As I shall show later on, educational books (in the widest sense of the

phrase) had appeared under the imprints of the firms amalgamated by the founder; but these had been less important and less well-known than the works of general interest. Allen taking advantage of the Education Act of 1870 put Longmans into the front rank of educational publishers at home and opened up a business in school books overseas, particularly in India and Africa, which was second to none. It is perhaps as well for Longmans that we have reached the age of air travel, for the firm might have been hard put to it to pay for all the horses which would have collapsed under authors—and others—with whom Rees' successors have ridden.

Thomas Norton Longman, having become a partner at the age of twenty-three, reigned for forty-eight years. If I were writing a history of the firm I should have to devote a great deal of space to this golden age of bookselling-publishing dominated by The Divan (T. N. Longman and his string of partners), The Emperor of the West (John Murray) and The Czar of Muscovy (Archibald Constable). I should have to list the most important publishing ventures of

Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Co.,  
The worthy fathers of the Row.

I should have to tell again the story of *Lalla Rookh*, the purchase of the Cottle business and the return of the copyright of *Lyrical Ballads*. But I am trying to find answers provided by the Longman family to the question why the firm has lasted 225 years, and I have unearthed almost all I am likely to discover under this heading. For the evidence, as I have complained before, is nearly all indirect; we can see the results but we have to guess at their causes.

We are, however, told that Thomas Norton enjoyed his family life at Hampstead and liked music so much that he

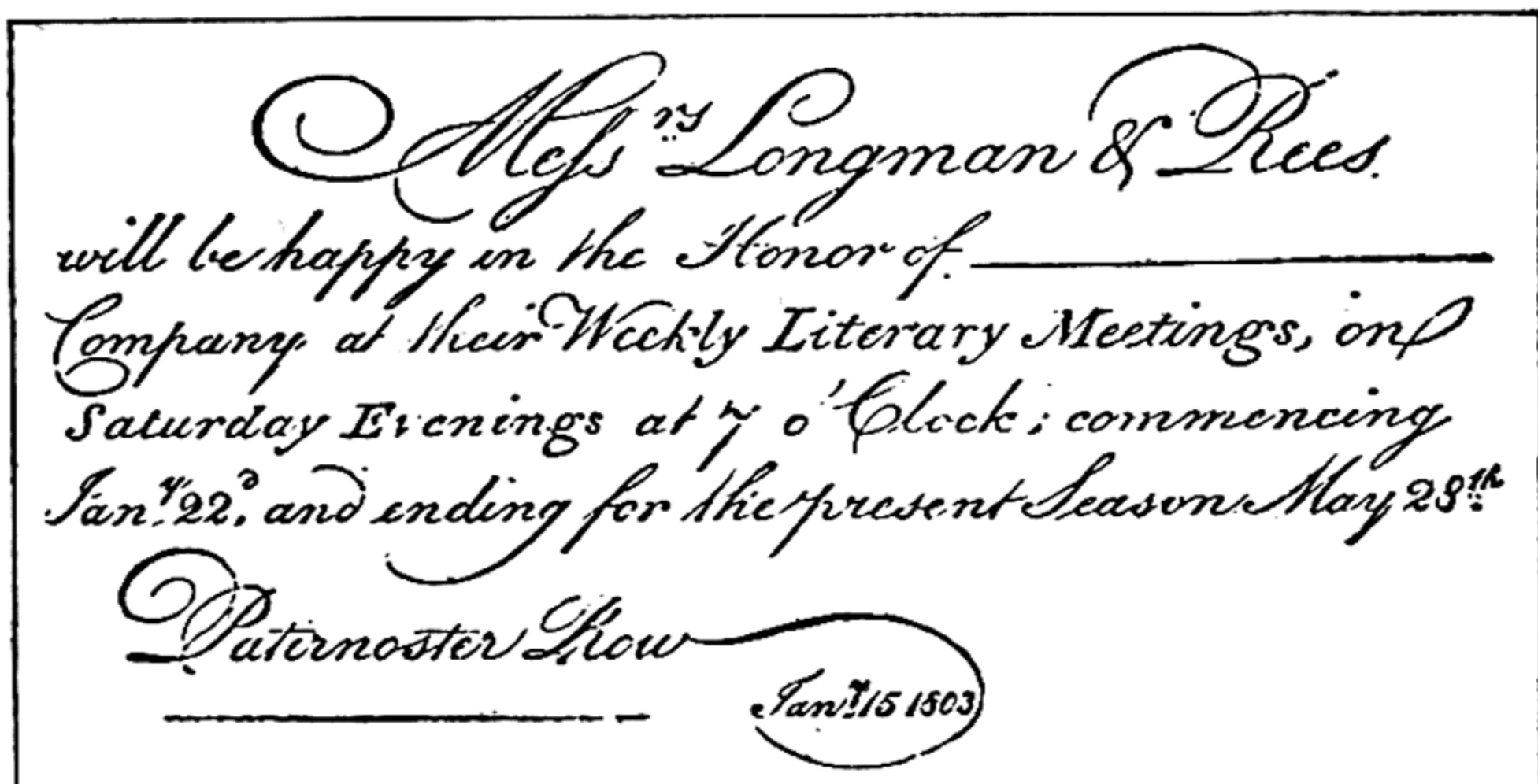
built an organ for his children. Henry Crabb Robinson, in one of the few pieces of direct description that we have, called him a 'quiet, gentlemanly man'. Southey said of him: 'That man has a kind heart of his own.' This suggests either nothing at all or an anticipation of the fashionable schizophrenia of today, the Longman heart being divided between his activities as a man and his functions as a publisher; which may perhaps have been true. Scott confides to his journal in 1828 that 'Longman and Company have also at length opened their oracular jaws'. 'Oracular' sounds like a tribute though its place in the sentence between 'at length' and 'jaws' might suggest otherwise. Since Scott was famous at the time, we must presume that 'Longman and Company' means the senior partner; or was *he* such a much greater man that he could afford to leave a mere novelist to Orme or Brown or Green? It is very difficult to get a picture of the man, though there is a portrait in oils, a reproduction of which I have used as a frontispiece.

There is, however, evidence for two practices of the firm which, if they were not originated by Thomas Norton, certainly received his approval. If you had been in the literary swing at the beginning of the nineteenth century (provided you did not show yourself too closely connected with Lord Byron) you would probably have received an invitation like the one reproduced on the opposite page.

Southey advised Coleridge to go to these general receptions. 'You will see a coxcomb or two, and a dull fellow or two; but you will perhaps meet Turner and Duppa, and Duppa is worth knowing.' There were also literary dinners at No. 39 long after the Longmans had moved to Hampstead. Here were entertained those of real importance—and entertained must be taken in its widest sense, for Sydney Smith, who was connected with the Longmans both by marriage and by the



*Edinburgh Review*, was often of the company. Even his not being present must have enlivened one of these dinners for I cannot imagine the host failing to read to his guests the



following refusal: 'Dear Longman, I cannot accept your invitation, for my house is full of country cousins. I wish they were once removed.' Washington Irving described a dinner given by 'a company of booksellers, whose firm surpassed in length that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego' with such vividness that Tom Moore was afraid that his friends in Paternoster Row would recognize themselves. The occasion was a 'kind of field-day, which the house gave twice a year to its authors'. At dinner 'the two ends were occupied by two partners of the house. . . . A popular poet had the post of honour; opposite to whom was a hot-pressed traveller in quarto with plates. A grave-looking antiquarian, who had produced several solid works, that were much quoted and little read, was treated with great respect, and

seated next to a neat dressy gentleman in black, who had written a thin, genteel, hot-pressed octavo on political economy, that was getting into fashion. Several three-volumed duodecimo men, of fair currency, were placed about the centre of the table; while the lower end was taken up with small poets, translators, and authors who had not as yet risen into much notoriety.' Irving explains how a good friend of his pointed out the most noteworthy features of the evening. 'There are certain geographical boundaries in the land of literature, and you may judge tolerably well of an author's popularity by the wine his bookseller gives him. An author crosses the port line about the third edition, and gets into claret; and when he has reached the sixth or seventh, he may revel in champagne and burgundy.' As for the partners 'the grave gentleman is the carving partner, who attends to the joints; and the other is the laughing partner, who attends to the jokes;' but there was 'a certain degree of popularity to be obtained before a bookseller could afford to laugh at an author's jokes'. I hope that when Irving's *Tales of a Traveller* reached London Longman and Rees laughed together at their portraits.

No. 39 and the name of Longman in the days of Thomas Norton acted as magnets not only to those with literary tastes and interests but also to those with stakes in, or hopes for success in, the same kind of business. Young Appleton when he came over from the States in 1832, some ten years after Irving, made it a point to go 'at least once a week' and on one occasion he met the 'original John Murray'. Archibald Constable himself worked for a time at Longmans, and Trübner acted as foreign corresponding clerk. Edward Moxon, the 'bookseller poet', was also working there as a clerk when he called on Wordsworth, during his summer holidays (I was surprised and delighted to find that such



things were allowed) with an introduction from Lamb in his pocket. But there was no job for Daniel Macmillan. Mr. Green asked him to leave his address and a specimen of his penmanship; young Mr. Longman, whom he called on several days later, asked him to call again on Monday. But there was still no job and Macmillan could not afford to wait. The name of Longman in 1833 had fired the imagination of this fervent young man. 'I must go to Longmans,' he almost prayed in a letter home. It was something to have given future publishers their early training. Might it not be even more to have unconsciously directed the ambitions of a young publisher of potential genius by the mere example of a name and two brief interviews in the 'house'? The whole publishing world must be richer for the lead given by Thomas Norton Longman who continued to dominate the 'long firm' until 1842 when his practice of riding to the City every day, although he was over seventy, brought about his death by a fall from his horse.

With his death ends a span of 118 years presided over by three members of the family. There end also the periods of establishment and consolidation and the first great period of expansion. From these years and from the three men who impressed their ambitions and their personalities on them it is possible, I think, to glean all the answers that concern the Longman family. Those who have controlled the business during the last 107 years have provided no *new* answers; the interesting thing is that, in themselves and in their policies, they have provided the old answers over again under new conditions and with changing problems. That is what, if they had thought so far into the future, the first Longmans would have wanted and that is why I need not go into the history of the firm after 1842.

## THE 1640 ANSWER<sup>1</sup>

THE Chinese count the age of a child from the date of its conception; there is therefore a healthy precedent for going back beyond the more normal date of birth. When Thomas Longman was looking for a business into which he could put his money, his limited experience and his enthusiasm, he had the good fortune to be recommended a healthy baby—William Taylor's business in Paternoster Row. Part of it (and here we leave the analogy) was already eighty-four years old and all of it stood high in the reputation of the trade and was intimately known, through many joint ventures, to Longman's master. *Mere* age, of course, has no significance; but when age is coupled with a struggle through difficult times and an attempt to build a sturdy business with principles of honest dealing and a character of its own, it begins to assume a cumulative power that, in the right hands, can be very strong. A bookselling and publishing business had been carried on at the *same* 'Sign of the Ship' since the reign of Charles I. It had therefore survived the difficulties and uncertainties of the Civil War and the Restoration, and the chances of taking the wrong side, religious or political, during the reigns of the later Stuarts. It had also survived the difficulties that were peculiar to the book trade during the same period, the partial solution of which was one of the pieces of luck with which Thomas Longman began. There must have been some strength in the business.

<sup>1</sup> Much of the material for this section has been generously supplied by C. S. S. Higham.

John Crook was one of the many booksellers in St. Paul's Churchyard—he was to be found at the Greyhound—when, in 1640, he took over the premises, not hitherto used for bookselling, of the Ship. He did a certain amount of publishing—mostly political pamphlets, and the sermons and other works of divines—and the title-page from a folio edition of Usher's *Annales* is reproduced opposite page 34. He must have made some sort of a name for himself since, on the return of Charles II, he was appointed King's Printer in Dublin, where the royal control of the trade was as rigid as it had been in London a century before. The last years of Crook's life were saddened, perhaps his life was even shortened, by the first of the three fires which have devoured the business, the fire of 1666. How much he lost by this disaster is not known; even with the backing of Insurance Companies or a helpful Government it requires great courage to begin all over again with no premises and no stock to sell. Crook, with the help of his wife Mary (how often one comes across women in the early history of the book trade, assisting the men or even working on their own; and the Marys in the Ship story seem to take on the qualities of Marthas too!), set up his business, probably under the old sign, in Duck Lane which leads into Smithfield; here he aimed to carry on till the rebuilding in the Churchyard should be completed. In 1669 he put out a reprint of 'The French Gardiner . . . Englished by John Evelyn' but died almost immediately afterwards without being able to set up his sign over its old site.

Although John Crook had sons who were associated with the King's Printing Office in Dublin, and although at least one book appeared in Dublin with his wife's imprint, he was succeeded in his business by Benjamin Tooke, an old apprentice of his who had become a freeman the year before the



Fire. Tooke had been on his own at the Anchor in Duck Lane during the evacuation and he took over the Ship business just in time to move it back to the Churchyard. Here he continued to publish for nearly twenty years, carrying on at the same time as King's Printer in Dublin. Suddenly—at least it seems suddenly to us at this distance of time—he gave up his business at the Ship and, after holding various posts in the Stationers' Company, he began publishing again from Middle Temple Lane just before the close of the century. His fame is based on the last twenty years of his life when he became Swift's bookseller and, through this useful contact, publisher to other Irish men of letters and finally Printer to the Queen. But his importance to us is that he re-established the Ship in its starting place and carried on the publishing tradition of John Crook, before selling the business to the family from whom Thomas Longman bought it.

John Taylor was another Churchyard bookseller and was at the Globe. When, in 1687, Tooke vacated the Ship premises, Taylor moved in and for twenty years he steadily increased the value of the business. 'Mr. John Taylor', Dunton wrote in 1704, 'deals very much, and is very honest. He is industrious and obliging, and his principles are moderate.' This is perhaps not such wholehearted praise as he gave to Mr. Leigh, Mr. Midwinter and their 'topping business' but it is fulsome compared with his comment on Mr. Manship who 'is Mr. Norris's Bookseller; and as long as he can turn Metaphysics into Money, he is like to be continued'. Perhaps Manship's principles were not moderate, for a large number of booksellers, including the Taylors, must have kept themselves alive by turning Metaphysics into Money.

Some of the books published by John Taylor were still going twenty or thirty years later and were taken over by

Thomas Longman. In 1696, for instance, Taylor and six other booksellers published 'A Brief Concordance of the Holy Bible &c. In a new Method' prepared by Samuel Clarke. In 1710 he and four other booksellers published a folio collection of the works of Ezekiel Hopkins, late Lord Bishop of London-Derry. The first was still being sold by Osborn and Longman in 1726 and a new edition of the second was published by them—and others—two years later; either would feel quite comfortable in Longmans' Catalogue for 1949. In 1699 Taylor was one of a large number of booksellers who brought out in two parts, quarto, 'The Royal Dictionary, French-English, English-French' by Mr. Abel Boyer. An octavo edition was printed in 1729 for twenty-two booksellers among whom were Osborn and Longman, and priced at 18s. 6d. And so it went on, in revised editions, all through the century, thirty-two booksellers, Thomas II among them, undertaking the two-volume quarto edition of 1796. It was obviously a sound investment. In 1703 Taylor published, alone, a book for country doctors by William Salmon, M.D. Eleven years later his son, with three others, published a much bigger work by the same author. This was the 'Ars Anatomica: or the Anatomy of Humane Bodies. In seven books.' Stock of both these books was taken over by Thomas Longman but not, I think, reprinted. Their interest lies in the publishing, by William Taylor, of a book by one of his father's authors and the suggestion that *Salmon's Anatomy* is the biblio-ancestor of *Gray's Anatomy*, published by Longmans 150 years later and, in 1949, about to appear in its thirtieth edition. Success and fame belong to *Gray*, but I have a warm feeling for the earlier book and for the booksellers who put their money into it and thereby started a tradition. By a curious coincidence the name Salmon still appears in Longmans' catalogue, but now as the author of



a different *Materials and Structures*, a book for engineering students rather than for doctors.

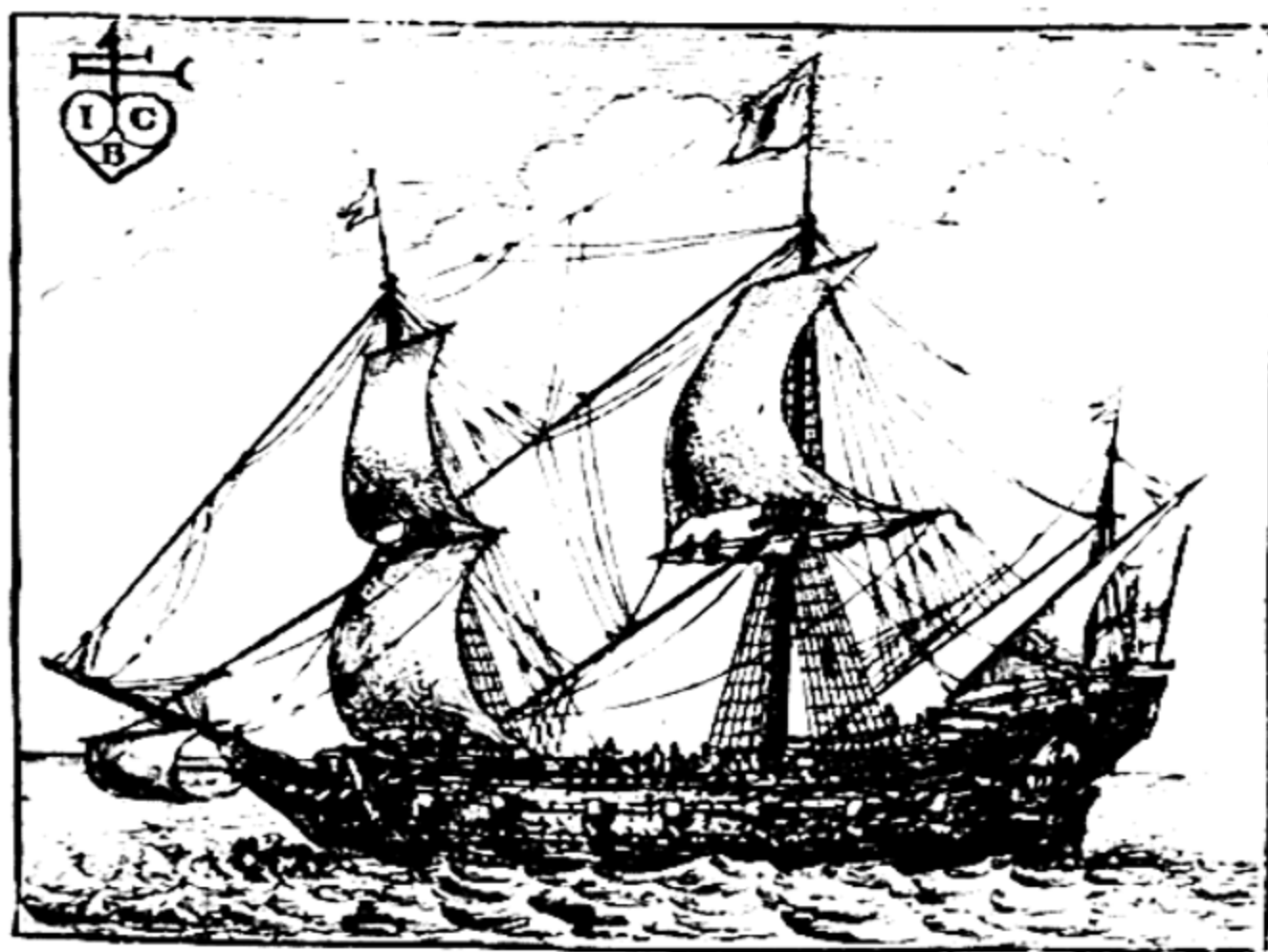
It seems from the lists of books published that, in 1707, John Taylor retired from the active conduct of the business, which he made over to his son William, retaining an interest only in a few publications like the works of Ezekiel Hopkins just mentioned. William stayed on at the Ship in St. Paul's Churchyard for four years; he then decided to move round the corner to Paternoster Row which had recently become fashionable as a street for booksellers whereas hitherto it had been largely given up to Mercers. The move may be an indication of prosperity and ambition; perhaps the premises in the Row were more commodious than those in the Churchyard; it certainly indicated the value of the Ship imprint. For William Taylor did not leave the sign to be used by his successor in the old shop but took it with him to Paternoster Row. There it remained the only address of the business for sixty years; and it is the publishing sign to this day. Moreover the house into which he moved remained the core of the Longman premises up to the fire of 1861, and on the site of it the firm continued to do business until the far more disastrous fire of December 1940.

William Taylor has several claims to be remembered. He was appointed along with two great booksellers, Jacob Tonson and Bernard Lintot, printer of the Votes. (One of his successors was associated with the beginnings of Hansard.) He published an English Grammar by the father of William Hogarth. Most memorable of all he was perspicacious enough to realize the importance of Defoe as a writer and shrewd enough to clear £1,000 (so it is said) on *Robinson Crusoe*, the first part of which he published in 1719. The second part quickly followed. The third part carried an introduction in which Taylor hits back at his less perspicacious brethren:

JACOBI USSERII ARMACHANI  
ANNALIUM  
PARS POSTERIOR.

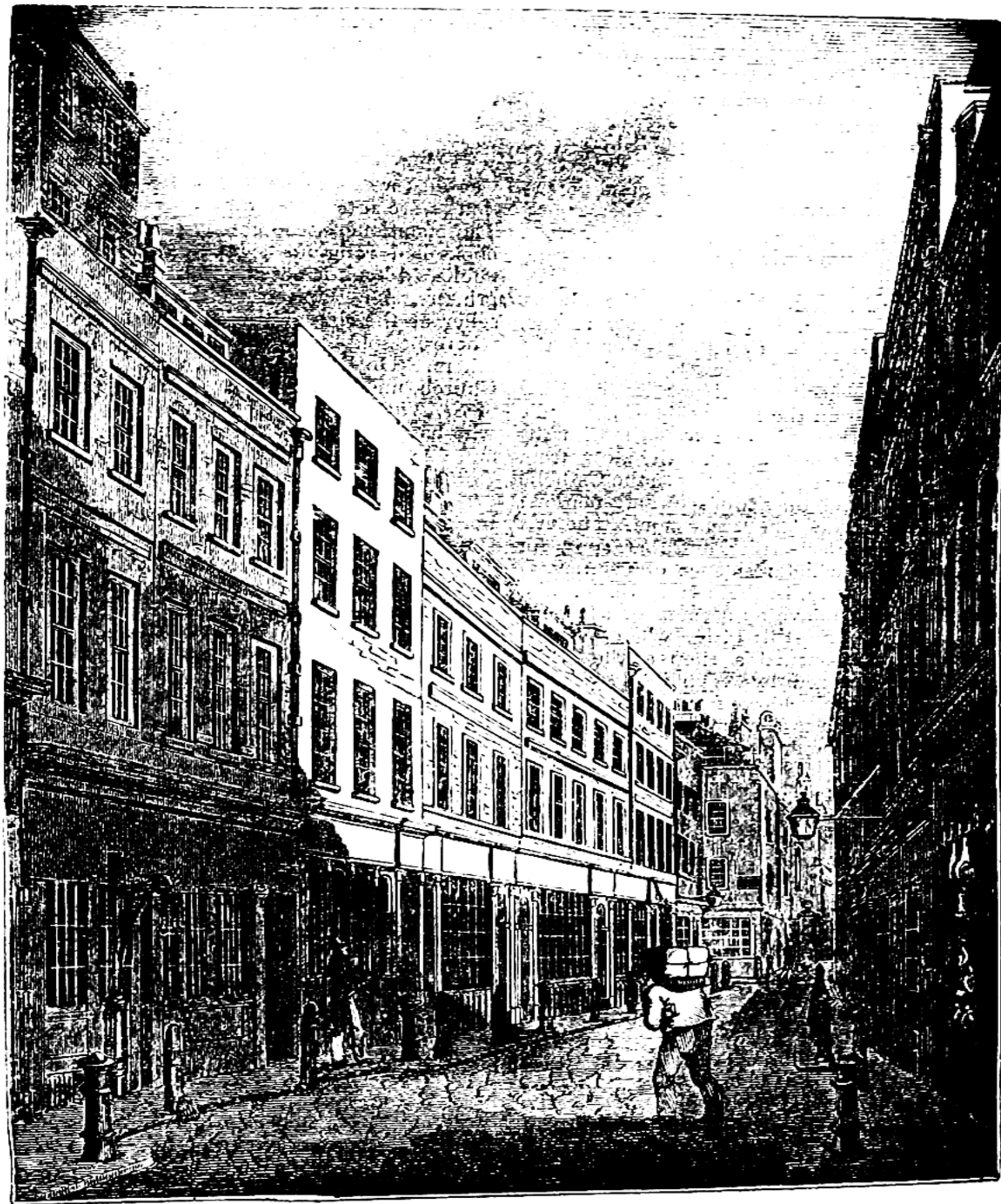
IN QUA,  
PRÆTER MACCABAICAM  
ET  
NOVI TESTAMENTI HISTORIAM,  
Imperii Romanorum Cæsarum sub C. Julio & Octaviano  
ortus, rerumque in Asiâ & Ægypto gestarum continetur  
CHRONICON:

AB  
Antiochi Epiphanis regni exordio, usque ad Imperii  
Vespasiani initia atque extremum Templi & Reipublicæ  
Judaicæ excidium, deductum.



LONDINI,  
Typis J. Fleisher, impensis Johannis Crook: apud quem prostant sub  
insigni Navis in Cœmeterio Paulino. MDCCLV.





*Paternoster Row looking towards Amen Corner  
Reproduced from Pinnock's Guide to Knowledge 2 August 1834*

The success the two former parts have met with has been known by the envy it has brought upon the editor expressed in a thousand hard words from the men of the trade; the effect of that regret which they entertained at their having no share in it. And I must do the author the justice to say that not a dog has wag'd his tongue at the work itself, nor has a word been said to lessen the value of it, but which has been the visible effect of that envy at the good fortune of the bookseller.

The early history of this best-seller is interesting. In 1722 Taylor was selling the first edition of Part III along with the fourth edition (which probably means the fourth printing) of Part II and the sixth of Part I. At Taylor's death two years later, Parts I and II were just going to press again and at his sale neither Thomas Longman nor John Osborn thought it worth while to buy the copyrights, which went, in equal portions, to Mears and Woodward for, respectively, £15 and £15 15s. The name of Longman does not appear on the title-page which had so courageously carried the Sign of the Ship when it was first published, until the tenth edition of 1753 when the names of uncle and nephew appear with those of eight other booksellers; Mears and Woodward had sold out and now one of the undertakers was Rivington. One final point; the third part was 'Printed for W. Taylor, at the Ship and Black Swan in Pater-Noster-Row 1720'. Taylor's ambition required additional premises between the appearances of Part II and Part III of *Robinson Crusoe*.

The Black Swan was a shop, with residential accommodation above, standing next to the Ship and at the junction of Paternoster Row and Ave Maria Lane, sometimes called Amen Corner. Here a pair of famous brothers with a famous name had carried on a bookselling-publishing business, Awnsham Churchill since 1680 and John since 1690. They were 'of a universal Wholesale Trade,' wrote Dunton.



I traded very considerably with them for several years: and must do them the justice to say, that I was never concerned with any persons more exact in their accompts, and more just in their payments. They are both so well furnished for any *great Undertaking*, that what they have hitherto proposed they have gone through, with great honour to themselves, and satisfaction to Subscribers; of which their printing 'Camden's Britannia,' and the publication of 'A New Collection of Travels,' lately come abroad, are undeniable instances. 'Sir Richard Blackmore's Poetical Works,' and 'Mr. Locke's Essay,' have received no small advantage by coming abroad through their hands; and to finish their Characters, they never starve an undertaking to save charges.

They were, in fact, in a big way of business and must have been partly responsible for making the Row a more fashionable locality for booksellers. Awnsham was also M.P. for Dorchester, his home town, and a friend of John Aubrey. When his brother died in 1719, Awnsham gave up his business as a bookseller, sold the remainder of his lease of the Black Swan to William Taylor, sold his stock (a good deal of it, no doubt, to his neighbour), but retained his interest in publishing; the last of his copyrights were not sold until after his death in 1728.

The importance of the Churchills in the Longman story is twofold. When Thomas bought Taylor's business he bought the goodwill not only of the Ship but of the Black Swan, and with the latter went the extra accommodation which enabled his father-in-law also to move into Paternoster Row. Secondly, there occurred in 1719 the first of a long and interesting series of purchases, not of copyrights or shares in copyrights, not of a whole business by a young man starting on his own—as Tooke bought his master's in 1669 or as Longman bought Taylor's in 1724—but the purchase of a business by a business with the gain, in this case, of larger premises and





*Some of Longmans' Colophons*

the goodwill of an additional sign. In later cases the advantages were different. When Thomas Norton Longman purchased Joseph Cottle's publishing business in 1799, he bought the rights to publish certain books and strengthened useful contacts with certain authors, most notably Wordsworth and Coleridge. When the Longmans bought J. W. Parker's business in 1862 they were interested in adding Buckle, Froude and John Stuart Mill to their list of authors. And when Longmans, Green & Co., in 1890, acquired the famous Rivington business they must have been pleased not only to be able to include such authors as Pusey and Liddon (and the early works of Newman) in their lists and to gain a larger interest in *The Annual Register*, but also to establish yet another link with the past. For in the year when William Taylor moved his sign to the Row, Charles Rivington bought Chiswell's business at the Rose and Crown and thereafter published from the Bible and Crown in Paternoster Row. The purchase of business by business—of the less by the greater, the unlucky by the fortunate, the foolish by the wise, the heirless by those whose quiver is full—is inevitable in the economic system in which the firm grew to maturity and, to many, a cause more of sadness than of rejoicing. There is some comfort, however, in the thought that the reputation of a publishing firm is built up by the joint efforts of author and publisher; that a publisher buys the business of another, not to squeeze out a rival selling exactly the same commodity as himself but for the authors whom he gains and for whom he must have some predisposition; and that therefore something of the character of the acquired business is not only already present in the acquiring business but is given stronger life in it by the purchase.

There is still one association to which I must briefly refer. Thomas Longman was apprenticed to John Osborn whose

business was amalgamated with that of the Ship and Black Swan. Osborn had been apprenticed to a most remarkable man. Thomas Guy set up as a bookseller in Lombard Street shortly after Tooke began in the Churchyard. He made a considerable success of acting for the Oxford University Press in London, particularly by selling their bibles. Perhaps as a result of this useful connexion he began, in 1682, to use the sign of the Oxford Arms. He also did well by publishing bibles of his own, after squaring the King's Printers and the Stationers' Company. Guy had the reputation of being mean in his private affairs though his carefulness was part of his purpose in life. Dunton does not mention him as a bookseller though he wrote at a time when Guy was still in the business and while Osborn was still his apprentice; but he refers to him as 'a man of strong reason who can talk very much to the purpose upon any subject you will propose'. By 1710 he was on to bigger subjects than publishing. It is perhaps significant that the first book bearing his imprint was a History of Barbados; and, though he also published volumes like 'The Complete English Scholar in Spelling, Reading and Writing' and a Latin-English, English-Latin Dictionary by Elisha Coles (in the thirteenth and eighteenth editions of which—and, by deduction, in other editions—the Longman family had shares) his eyes and his ambitions must have been set further afield. Having increased his capital by judicious investment in Government securities he invested hugely in the South Sea Company and sold out just before the break in the market. He, too, had been M.P., but for his mother's home town, Tamworth, and was known long before his death as a great benefactor to London. His name now lives in that of the hospital.

Osborn was probably a relation of Guy's and, with a nephew of Guy's called Varnam, took over the business at



the Oxford Arms in 1710. With the sign went the copyrights; and the copyrights, though not the sign, went with Osborn when he moved to Paternoster Row, and the documentary evidence for them was only destroyed in 1940. The Longmans therefore owed something to the enterprise of Guy, particularly in the field of educational books, though they would not, I feel, have entirely approved of his methods of doing business; Guy was manifestly outside the pattern of the Longman family tradition and was capable of founding, with the aid of his fortune, an independent institution not a living organism. But with his institution there is a new link. Since the publication, in 1930, of the twenty-fourth edition of *Gray's Anatomy*, the editors of this work have come from Guy's Hospital.

Osborn and Varnam, probably following the bookselling practice they had been taught by old Guy, kept their eyes on developments across the Atlantic. In 1712 they published 'Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs of the Old and New Testaments. For the use edification and comfort of the Saints in publick and private, especially in New England'. This was the English edition of the famous 'Bay Psalm Book' (1640), possibly the first book to be published in the Colonies. There was thus the beginning before 1724 of a two-way publishing traffic which still continues. I cannot do more than mention here the interesting correspondence between the Longman family and a bookseller in Boston called Knox: it concerns the payment of dues which were outstanding at the start of the American War; it suggests that the Longmans were doing a considerable business as early as the reign of Thomas II and it reveals the generous heart and high business principles of the American bookseller. In the nineteenth century the Longmans began to send travellers to the United

States and they eventually founded a separate branch in 1887. Having once begun the habit of looking for business overseas, and remembering that ships are not afraid of water, the Longmans naturally looked to other continents besides Europe and America. Before the beginning of the twentieth century Asia had an office in Bombay, to which were later added offices at Calcutta and Madras; this portion of the business has now split off and is run by a separate but related company. Africa has its office in Cape Town and Australia in Melbourne, and there are agents in many other areas. Moreover the recent war has proved the existence of booksellers, from Paris to the Far East, who have the same standards of business conduct as the Knoxes of the eighteenth century.

It is a far cry from 'J. Osborn and T. Varnam 1712' to 'Longmans, Green & Co. 1949' but it is possible to see how the combination in the earlier pair, of educational publishing and a nose and an eye for an overseas market, have provided both the means and the purpose that have resulted in world-wide expansion. But which is the purpose and which is the means to achieve it cannot now be unravelled.

Anyhow, it does not much matter. I set out to try to reply to a rather impertinent question. I have grouped such answers as I have been able to find or suggest under three main headings. Parts of what I have written may seem irrelevant; there is a great deal more that might have been said. If some can see the point of the apparent irrelevancies and if answers to fill the gaps suggest themselves to others, I shall have achieved my purpose in focusing attention on an anniversary. Whether it is the anniversary of the founding of the firm, of the birth of the founder or of the launching of the Ship, is not important.



Let me finish by quoting a couplet composed by C. J. Longman, of the fifth generation, without whose bibliographical researches I should have found it much more difficult to write this essay:

And may the Black Swan never pale  
While still the Ship rides out the gale.



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